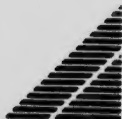
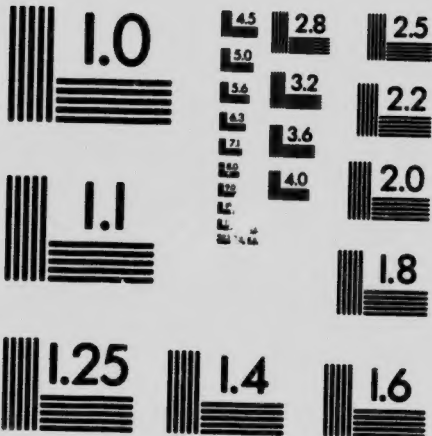


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DELIVERED BEFORE

The Canadian Club
Of Montreal

JANUARY 25th, 1909

BY

REV. R. A. FALCONER, LL D.,
President of Toronto University.

Address by Rev. R. A. Falconer, LL.D.,
President of Toronto University

Before the Canadian Club of Montreal

January 25th, 1909

SUBJECT : "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure"

In opening, Dr. Falconer drew a vivid picture of the horrors of the American civil war, and pointed out how the north and south gradually trended apart, until from beginnings which ran far back into history, the feeling became so intense that nothing short of war and the eradication of the fundamental ideas of ~~due~~ or the other could satisfy it. The long drawn out agony was ~~due~~ to no sudden irritation, when for a long time such great men as Lee and Jackson stood undecided, pondering into which scale to cast their swords. Their convictions were deep seated.

Dr. Falconer then dealt with the gradual growth of antagonism between the Boers and the British, in South Africa, which at last produced the recent war.

Proceeding, Dr. Falconer said :— These causes, often growing gradually year after year in a way which cannot be explained, are just those causes whose beginnings should be arrested whenever they occur.

We have all seen something of the processes through which peoples and nations are estranged, how from apparently insignificant beginnings they grow wider and wider apart, until the difference becomes so acute that any result may follow.

Take the condition of affairs between Great Britain and Germany, during the past few years, at the possibility of which those of us who realize the incalculable intellectual debt we owe

to Germany, must feel inexpressible regret. But, estrangements grow just in this way, and things go on until we are confronted with situations which is almost impossible to solve.

Dispatch from a recent address by Sir Edward Grey:—
“Referring to the debate on the Kaiser, in the Reichstag, he remarked appreciatively that not a word had been said by any members of any party incurring hostility towards Great Britain or any other country. He said, he hoped the example would be reciprocated and reflected when anything was said here about Germany. So long as the British did not believe that the people of any other country had ill-will toward them, and so long as other countries did not believe that the British had ill-will towards themselves, it would be found that even the worst difficulties could be settled by diplomacy without trouble. Half of the difficulties in foreign policy arose from the exceeding ingenuity of different countries in attributing motives and intentions to others. The newspapers of the various countries are much more fertile in inventing motives and intentions, than are ministers. Foreign governments and our own government live from hand to mouth, and have fewer deep plans than people suppose.

All this is a comment upon the old words, “Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth.” Statesmanship looking far ahead will remove initial occasions for prejudice. In the long run, its true greatness is to be measured, not by the ability with which it has conducted the nation through war into seemingly larger material possession, but by the clear head and the hand grasping the tiller strongly, so that it is deftly turned aside from furious currents into calm and peaceful waters.

I have spoken as though war were the greatest of national calamities, but war is simply national antagonisms raised to such a pitch that they break out into regular campaigns of battles. These sharp physical encounters are terrible indeed; the physical agony, the maimed bodies, the loss of life, are horrible to contemplate. But, the individual suffering is short

though severe. The worst disaster of war is the moral dislocation, the shattering of the arts that flourish in peace, and the rankling hatreds. Battles are bad; the state of war is worse.

This leads me to remark, that war is only a less drawn-out agony than is found to-day within the social organism of every civilized nation. In all our large cities there is an accumulation of suffering which in its duration at least would surpass that of any battle. There are tales of mean streets, more harrowing than those of battlefields; for the latter may for a day echo with the shrieks of the suffering and the dying; but the silent anguish of human despair never has its tension relieved in some city tenements. Just as there are greater agonies than those of battlefields, so there are more enduring and ruinous hatreds than those excited by war. We are thankful to hear that in South Africa, old enmities are dying fast. Men, once foes, are working together for the political salvation of their country. But, no one to-day can fail to be troubled by the evil spirit that has entered into multitudes of people, so that in some countries social disorder is common, while in others, there is a growing antagonism between different classes of society. Fortunately for us, this antagonism is not very strong here, but in older countries there is an ill-will which is really as harmful as war, because while outwardly it has not produced such results, the moral condition is perhaps equally injurious.

Nor is all this the result of any momentary impulse, or we could be more hopeful. It has grown from causes more serious than those which produce war—it is the result of conditions continued through many generations, during which the poor have been growing poorer and the rich relatively richer. But, the suffering is more acute, because to-day the poor have become conscious of their lack, and no surface cutting will drain the great swamp over which these pestilential vapours brood.

But you may ask, why make mention of all this in Canada to-day? We are told that we know practically nothing of poverty. We are at peace, and there is no sign of trouble on

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our borders. And no one has a deeper conviction than I have of the unity of the Dominion, or is more proud of the way in which its Provinces have been welded together and our true national life developed during the last ten or fifteen years.

But, our country presents physical conditions which give opportunity for many things which may in time cause disaster. Our population is spread over a vast extent of country, with many and varying local interests. The peoples coming to us from other countries bring their differences to increase the difficulties arising from the local distribution of our population.

Happy, therefore, as we are to-day, it is part of our duty to protect ourselves against the beginnings of evil, lest there come to us in the future those things which have proved so disastrous to other and older countries. These things are not so far from us. The world is too small for us to keep Canada as a Utopian preserve. Fast steamers bring books and news; slow steamers bring immigrants with ideas more penetrating, more subversive than the written word. The immigrants continue to pour in, and fortunate are we when they go far and become owners of land, because ownership always gives a steadying sense of responsibility. But, in the United States, a heavy precipitate of this immigration settles in the great seaboard cities, and there you have bits of Europe gathered together, with their old ideas fermenting and causing problems which we too may well have to deal with. How then are we to prevent a repetition of these troubles of the Old World, so as to avoid any similar difficulties within our own country?

How are these evils to be averted? Something may be done by legislation and public enactment; but the real destiny of a people is not shaped in its parliaments. There are 'laws of virtuous education, bonds and ligaments of the Commonwealth, the pillars and the sustainers of every written statute.

At least Two great virtues must precede legislation. As a people, we must realize that we must exercise a wide spirit of toleration throughout the length and breadth of the Dominion. Not particularly a religious toleration, but a toleration which

has the ability to give credit to another man for his opinions and to give him liberty in his opinions, while at the same time one maintains rigorously one's own. To know when to hold one's opinion, when to modify it, when to receive others' opinions, and how to fix one's proper relation to the people around one—that is a most difficult accomplishment, and a mark of high intellectual development.

As a people, in a country with such a government as we have, based as it is on rule system by majorities, we must learn the virtue of toleration. For the minority in Parliament represents a somewhat smaller number of people, but at least as much sincerity and earnestness as the majority which constitutes the government. So the minority must have at least the right to be heard—and as Lord Acton said, 'liberty is measured by the treatment of minorities.' If this spirit of tolerance were maintained in the country, one of the most dangerous roots of discord would be removed.

The next great virtue is to understand thoroughly the difference between rivalry and enmity. Learn to 'play the game' all through life, as the student learns to play fair on the athletic field. A high moral demand develops true rivalry which will not give way to enmity. What destroys the honor of the game in business? Men, who through selfishness and dishonest practices forget this ancient virtue. To forget it, means underhand ways and unfairness in which true rivalry must perish.

This virtue applies to our national life in the Dominion. The various and distantly scattered Provinces must make their progress in a spirit of true rivalry, without enmity and selfishness. And in the rich superabundance of our country's resources, nothing but insensate greed could give rise to the enmity of selfish rivalry. There is plenty of room for the development of each without one province despising the other or trying to grasp from the other some of the good, which is so great that all may share it in common and have abundance.

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This spirit is also growing through the world. Amongst the nations, international law is steadily increasing in strength, one nation learning from the other. To-day, the "foreigner" is no longer the enemy he was supposed to be years ago. To-day there is a comity of nations, and surely the time will come when there will be a chivalry of nations also.

What practical issues then should we look for? We should demand from our statesman, the removal of those causes which might tend to split our country socially or provincially; the counteraction of things which at the beginning are dangerous, and the prevention of a foolish emphasis upon the points where we differ. They should wisely insist upon and direct the work for the common good, in which we may all equally share.

We should also demand in our public life a study and presentation of very much larger political problems than we have sometimes been accustomed to. At the last Dominion general election we were all breathing an atmosphere that was thick with personalities. That was apparently because there were not enough large issues before the people on which men could honorably differ; and where there are no large issues, men for lack of something else, take up questions and points that only leave people wrangling, give rise to prejudice, and allow for the insistence upon things that separate us.

But, there are upon our horizon, as I have said, large enough questions looming up to engage the attention of our people, so that at the very beginning things which if allowed to grow will be very hard to cure, may be prevented. In our public life we should expect a study of these larger questions.

We are told that Canadian politics are uninteresting. Unfortunately that is only too true. But it is not because we shall not have interesting problems soon or because they are not near. New questions must arise and we have to face them, because we have representative government, and our government represents what the people think. Therefore, it surely becomes us as individuals to consider the future of our country,

to look closely into the conditions of life to-day; not to blind ourselves to issues that will soon present themselves. By doing this, we shall create an atmosphere of sympathy and intelligence in which it will be possible for those who represent us in parliament to prepare issues for us which they otherwise would not be able to present.

Therefore, as Canadians belonging to these Canadian Clubs, it is our duty, as we are here in our strength—because most of us are young men—to turn our utmost power of thought upon the questions that are lying unsolved round about us in business, in society, in the public life of this Dominion and in the Imperial conditions in which we are living. We must form intelligent opinions upon these things that we may not fall into trifling, degenerate ways. Let us cherish large enough ideas to give opportunity to those who perhaps have more time than we have and more experience for framing policies that will lead our people out to a larger and fuller life in which we may hope there will be little room for repetition of the evils we have seen in other lands in the past.

We cannot go on thinking little of our future; the sooner we think seriously of it the better. Nor can we escape our duty by criticizing others who essay large tasks while we sit quietly in our own offices and complain of the evils of the present.

In the words of Milton, "I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race where the immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat."

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